

# THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | March 5, 2023

## Assurance of Salvation:

- ❖ **John 10:27-28**, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
- ❖ **Romans 8:30**, And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- ❖ **1 John 5:13**, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

## Tremors of Confusion:

- ❖ **Hebrews 6:4-6**, For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

## Two views that I don't subscribe to:

- 1. Salvation-can-be-lost view:** Salvation can be lost if believers fall away from Christ.
- 2. Easy-believism view:** Believers can fall away from the faith and yet remain saved; they only lose rewards.

**The state of the recipients:** They were stuck in the basics of the Christian faith. They were dull in hearing and not progressing towards spiritual maturity. They were shaken in their faith in trials, which the author was reviving through the supremacy of Christ.

**There is a clear connection between what is stated before and what is about to be stated because of the word "FOR". Why did the author state these words?**

- ❖ **Hebrews 5:12**, **For** though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again **the basic principles of the oracles of God**. You need milk, not solid food...
- ❖ **Hebrews 6:1-2**, Therefore let us leave the **elementary doctrine of Christ** and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

The following is a continuation of the basic principles and elementary experiences of a Christian faith:

For it is impossible [to restore them again to repentance]—in the case of those who have

- ❖ **once been enlightened—how they have been enlightened?**
- ❖ **who have tasted [experienced] the heavenly gift and have shared [experienced] in the Holy Spirit**—experienced in some way the work of the Holy Spirit
  - ▶ Observe, the author did not use words like “filled with the Holy Spirit”, “baptized by the Holy Spirit” “sealed/indwelt by the Holy Spirit.”
- ❖ and have **tasted the goodness of the word of God**—they have experienced the power of God’s Word and appreciated its truth.
- ❖ and **the powers of the age to come**,
  - ❖ **Hebrews 2:3-4**, It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
- ❖ **and then have fallen away** [from the faith they professed], **to restore them again to repentance**,
  - This shows that these people once experienced repentance, **6:1**, “not laying again a foundation of **repentance from dead works**”
  - After having sufficient exposure to God’s blessings, if they have fallen away, it is impossible to bring them again to repentance.

“**Fall**” [which is temporal and experienced by believers] is different from “**fallen away**” [a permanent rejection]

- ❖ **v.6, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.**
  - You either **believe in Christ and honor the crucified Savior** who died on the cross for your sins, or **you crucify Him again by your unbelief and dishonor His work on the cross.** HAVE YOU BELIEVED IN THE CRUCIFIED SAVIOR?

**Point:** It is possible to believe for a while [superficial, shallow], and then fall away.

- ❖ **Luke 8:13**, And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. **But these have no root [haven’t gone deeper];** they believe for a while, and **in time of testing fall away.**

- ❖ **2 Peter 2:20-22**, For if, after they [2:1-3, **false prophets**] have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, **the last state has become worse for them than the first**. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

**Illustration:** 1730s—40s was a great revival during the time of Jonathan Edwards. This revival received criticisms for spiritual ecstasies and also many claimed to have experienced tremendous spiritual renewal. Edwards wrote “**Religious Affections**” listing 12 negative signs of conversion—including strong emotions, bodily reactions, and an outbreak of religious conversation—and 12 positive signs that show the Spirit has truly regenerated the heart unto faith in Christ.

**Some superficial affections Edwards mentioned:**

- ▶ No Sign 1. The religious affections are very great, or raised very high. (127-31)
- ▶ No Sign 2. They have great effects on the body. (131-35)
- ▶ No Sign 5. They come with texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to the mind. (142-45)
- ▶ No Sign 9. They dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship. (163-65)
- ▶ No Sign 11. They make persons that have them, exceedingly confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate. (167-81)

**What do you think about these people who seem to have exceeded the state of those mentioned in 6:4-6?**

- ❖ **Matthew 7:21-23**, Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘**I never knew you [from the beginning you weren’t mine]**’; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

**Point of the author to Hebrews:** It is not the basic principles and elementary experiences of the Christian faith that prove a person a good soil. A person may have such experiences and fall back into an irreversible condition. Don’t get stuck in elementary teachings. Move towards maturity. It is perseverance in faith and growth towards spiritual maturity that a person evidences to be a good soil, that is a truly saved person.

**FRUITFULNESS IS IN MIND:**

<p><b>Press on to maturity</b></p> <p><b>Observe:</b> The land didn't produce useful crops at first and then later, it began to bear thorns and thistles.</p>	<p><b>Hebrews 6:7,</b> For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated [<b>fruitfulness</b>], receives a blessing from God.</p>
<p><b>Do not press on to maturity</b></p>	<p><b>Hebrews 6:8,</b> But if it bears thorns and thistles [<b>no fruitfulness</b>], it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.</p>

**Luke 8:14-15,** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and **their fruit does not mature.** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. [cf. 2 Peter 1:8-11]

**Similarly, the author of Hebrews:** You grow towards maturity, you will never fall. Those who fall back from initial gospel experiences, they will never again return.

**Four kinds of people [Hebrews 6:4-8 and Parable of the Sower]:**

- **Deny** the Gospel
- **Fall away** from the Gospel
- **Barren** in the Gospel
- **Fruitful** in the Gospel

WHERE DO YOU FALL IN THESE FOUR CATEGORIES?

**Applications from Hebrews 6:4-9:**

**First,** the point here is not about losing salvation but about irremediable apostasy (falling away from initial gospel experience).

- ▶ This passage doesn't describe the state between salvation and sanctification. It describes the state between **the reception of the gospel and salvation.**
- ▶ This describes the experience of the power of the gospel and **not the experience of the transformation of life** by the power of the gospel.

**Second, the dilemma:** The author does not clearly state that 6:4-6 is the state of the unsaved, and he also states that this dreadful condition doesn't apply to his readers. The focus of this passage is to press on to maturity, for those who do not move forward and fall backwards, they terribly fall into irreversible condition.

**6:9,** Though we speak in this way [**4-6, about those people in the third person**], yet in your case [**about you people in the second person**], **beloved [endearing term]**, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.

- ❖ **Hebrews 10:37-39**, For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” **But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.**

**Third, 6:9**, Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of **better things—things that belong to salvation.**

- ▶ 4-6—the things described here do not necessarily belong to salvation. We must go beyond these elements to understand the evidence of salvation.

**Fourth, what is in the author’s mind a truly saved person?**

- ❖ **1 John 2:3**, And by this we know that **we have come to know him**, if we keep his commandments.
- ❖ **Hebrews 3:14**, For **we have come to share in Christ**, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

**Sam Storms:** Note well: he says we 'have become' partakers of Christ, not 'will become' or 'are now partakers,' if we persevere in faith. In other words, holding fast in faith, i.e., persevering, proves that you became a partaker of Christ in the past. Failing to hold fast, i.e., apostatizing from the faith, proves you never were a partaker of Christ.

- ❖ **1 John 2:19**, They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. **But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

**Tertullian’s (155 AD – c. 220 AD):** "People are not Christians unless they persevere to the end."

**Fifth, these words were written to be conscientious of believers’ responsibility and not to be negligent.**

**Two dangers:**

- ▶ Too conscious of one’s responsibility and neglecting to trust in God’s sovereignty.
- ▶ Too conscious of God’s sovereignty and neglecting to work on one’s responsibility.

**God’s Sovereignty:**

- ❖ **Philippians 1:6**, And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Human Responsibility:**

- ❖ **Philippians 2:12-13**, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your**

**own salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### **God's Sovereignty:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 13:20-21**, Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

### **Human Responsibility:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 2:1**, Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, **lest we drift away from it.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 3:12**, Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, **leading you to fall away from the living God.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:11**, Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, **so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**
- ❖ **Hebrews 6:4-6**, For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

**Charles Spurgeon:** God preserves his children from falling away; but he keeps them by the use of means; and one of these is, the terrors of the law, showing them what would happen if they were to fall away.

**Illustration:** You are on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of a building. The whole 10<sup>th</sup> floor is set on fire. The firefighters tie a rope between the 15<sup>th</sup> floor and the opposite building. You pray and trust God to take you safely, but how do you move hanging on the rope?

### **Summary:**

- ▶ **Trust** in God's sovereign preserving work. **Always cling** to the cross.
- ▶ **Be sober** in your responsibility and move towards maturity. Don't let current trials and temptations drift you away from your eternal calling. Persevere in your faith till the end.